premises of two companies of Modern Group-Modern Terry Towels and Modern Denim to investigate the excise duty evasion; and

(b) if so, the outcome thereof and the action proposed to be taken against these companies?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir. The Directorate General of Anti-Evasion has recently conducted searches at the premises of M/s. Modern Terry Towels Ltd. and M/s. Modern Denim to investigate excise duty evasion.

(b) Appropriate action would be taken under the provisions of Central Excise Act, 1944 and rules made thereunder after the investigations are completed and duty evasion, if any, is established.

impact of Fall in Purchasing Power of Rupee on Comman Man

1886. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state;

(a) the rate of fall in the purchasing power of the rupee during 1960-70, 1970-80, 1980-90, 1990-95 and 1995-96 on the basis of 1960=100;

(b) the reasons for a sharp fall in the purchasing power of the rupee;

(c) what has been the impact of this fall on different classes of workers; and

(d) details of steps taken to safeguard the Common man?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The value of rupee as measured in terms of Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) with base 1960 declined from 100 paise in 1960 to 54.26 paise in 1970, 25.64 paise in 1980, 10.89 paise in 1990, 6.64 paise in 1995 and 5.90 paise as on September, 1996.

(b) The Movement in prices, changes in income levels together with spending habits of consumers are the main reasons for the decline in the purchasing power of rupee.

(c) Movement in price indices of various consumer categories such as industrial workers, urban on-manual employees and agricultural and rural labourers, indicate varying impact of the price movement. For example, the annual inflation rate in October, 1995 for industrial workers was 10.4%, it was 9.6% for urban non-manual employees and, 11.6% for Agricultural labourers.

(d) Government has taken special efforts to contain prices of key essential commodities. The Public Distribution System and Revamped Public Distribution System (PDS/RPDS) have been strengthened. Issue Prices of rice, wheat and sugar have not been raised since February, 1994. Government is continuing OGL import policy for selected essential commodities such as sugar, edible oils, pulses and low fat milk power at nil or reduced duty and import of edible oils on Government account for supply through PDS.

Legislation for Privatisation of Insurance Industry

1887. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to bring forward any legislation during the Winter Session of Parliament for privatisation of the insurance sector as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 19th November, 1996;

(b) whether Government are also aware that employees in insurance sector have announced a long term agitation programme in protest against the proposed legislation; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Central Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c)

It was stated during the Budget Speech in July, 1996 that—

> "An interim non-statutory Insurance Regulatory Authority was set up in January, 1996. I now propose to introduce a Bill to make it a statutory body and to empower it suitably. When I return to the subject of insurance in the next Budget, I shall address some of the policy parameters outlined in the CMP, including the sequence of steps for the restructuring of the insurance industry."

The Government is currently processing a Bill for giving statutory status to the interim Insurance Regulatory Authority set up in January, 1996. However, it was reported that some sections of the employees of the insurance industry went on a 24-hour hunger strike on 27th November, 1996 protesting against the Government's reported move for privatisation of the insurance sector. It is also reported that a call for a day's strike is contemplated on the day following the date of introduction of the Bill in the Parliament for giving statutory status to the Insurance Regulatory Authority. It was reported by the LIC and the GIC that the strike on the 27th November, 1996 did not create any noticeable impact on the insurance industry.

Inviting Foreign Media Representatives to Visit Places of Tourist importance

1888. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Department of Tourism invites representatives of media from abroad under its hospitality programme to visit various places of tourist importance located in the country;

(b) if so, what are the details of media representatives invited during the last three years and States where they were taken for visit, year-wise;

(c) whether this has helped in promoting tourism in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) to (d) The Department of Tourism invites travel writers, journalists, TV teams, travel agents, decision-makers, etc. under its hospitality programme which includes release of Mandatory Order Passages on Air India and Indian Airlines. The number of such guests who were invited from abroad during the last 3 years is as follows:

Year	No. of guests
1993-94	970
1994-95	1551
1995-96	852

These guests were invited to visit the major tourist attractions in different States and Union Territories. This programme has helped in promoting tourism to India as the media guest produce films and write articles on their return. This has resulted in increased tourist arrivals and foreign exchange earnings.

Proposal of Gujarat for Conversion of TV Transmitters

1889. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL:
SHRIMATI ANANDIBEN JETHABHAI PATEL:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received proposal from the Government of Gujarat to convert LPT Bhuj into HPT.

(b) whether the Government of Gujarat has also requested for the change of location of the HPT. Dwarka to another suitable site;